

HUMAN CHOICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Human Choice and Climate Change is a four-volume assessment of the social science research relevant to global climate change. The assessment takes as its starting point social conditions around the world. In approaching the climate change issue from a social science viewpoint, the assessment provides an important vantage point for scholars and policymakers alike. In the first three volumes, an international team of authors has reviewed the range of social science research, including what is currently known, uncertain, and unknown about global climate change. Within each topic area, the authors have reported these findings within diverse interdisciplinary frameworks and related the results to policy issues and problems. The final volume summarizes and comments on the research results, and themes and directions for the social sciences and policymaking.

Volume 1: The Societal Framework begins the assessment in the context of Earth's social, cultural, political, and economic systems. Climate change is occurring in a complex and rapidly changing framework of human choices that shape people's perception of the issue and the opportunities for response. The social context of climate change and knowledge about it are usually unexamined. Social science analysis reveals the extent to which our understanding of the science, diagnoses of underlying causes, and views of appropriate action are not merely technical judgments but embody deep-seated social commitments that provide the context for response options.

Volume 2: Resources and Technology anchors both the climate change issue and social science approaches to it in the context of the Earth's resources: climate, land, water, energy sources, and materials used in technologies. Climate change is the result of fundamental human choices about the conversion of energy and human occupation of the Earth's surface. These activities have been identified as both the proximate causes of greenhouse-related emissions and the sites of primary impacts on human activity.

Volume 3: The Tools for Policy Analysis describes the existing toolkit of rational analysis and planning techniques available to scientific researchers, analysts, and policymakers. The authors explain and assess the mainstream tools of economic analysis, games and simulations, decision analysis, and integrated assessment. The volume reveals a series of important shortcomings of the toolkit in the face of large, complex problems facing multiple stakeholders over intergenerational timeframes.

Volume 4: What Have We Learned? provides an editorial overview of the first three, reflexively focusing on the challenges that climate change issues present to the intellectual organization of social science, the lessons that the social sciences can bring to understanding climate change issues, and the implications of all this for policymakers.

A reviewer comment: "The editors have assembled a distinguished team of contributors from the breadth of the social sciences. The authoritative insights that they offer are skillfully drawn together and built upon in the fourth volume. The result is a work that is informative, thought-provoking and instructive." – Richard Perkins, in *Holocene*